

Going Beyond the Waterfall
Managing Scope Effectively Across the Project Life Cycle
By Barbara Davis & Darren Radford
(A book review by R. Max Wideman, FPMM)

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Introduction

Going Beyond The Waterfall by joint authors Barbara Davis and Darren Radford will be familiar territory for those in the Information Technology (IT) sector, i.e., people such as chief information officers, project managers and leaders, consulting firms and business analysts, architects and developers.¹ The focus of the book is on managing "scope" as a multi complex construct that necessitates a basic premise that scope is flexible like any of the other major components of project management. For those not heavily engaged in the IT sector, and software development in particular, this will likely be less familiar ground and something of a hurdle to cross. Nevertheless, the contents of the book contain some valuable insights in how to approach and manage complex projects from the outset.

As the authors say in their Preface:²

"In the past, the scope of a project was a clearly defined set of objectives, tangible goals, and high-level features designed to solve a particular problem or create some vehicle for enabling strategy. It was fixed and rigid, and considered immovable. The concept of scope as unchangeable is very much like staying on course even when a road gets washed away or a blizzard interferes with the trip."

"Therefore, scope must change as the business goals, drivers, and conditions change. The reality is that scope must also change as the project progresses, for the mere fact that the project starts with unclear information and a high lack of clarity and moves towards an increasing level of certainty and clarity."

Strong words indeed! True, that may be the present "reality", but perhaps with time, better understanding and education we can change that "reality" in the first place. Meantime, the authors suggest that:³

"The strongest takeaways [from the book] can be found in the answers to each of these questions:

1. Are we doing the right things, and are we doing them right?
2. What tasks and activities impact scope at the microscopic level?
3. How can project teams, business stakeholders, and user groups ensure that everything they do will help them achieve targeted outcomes?"

Well, we know the answer to the first question. It is only by doing some things that prove to be wrong, and also by doing them wrong can we learn which is right and how to do them. Well, if not "right", then certainly how to do them better the next time.

About the authors

Barbara Davis has held various titles and roles including Business and IT Portfolio Management, IT Operational Management, Methodologist, Solutions Consultant, Project Manager, Business Analyst, and

Professional Skills Trainer. Her experience also includes organizational change management, document change management, and auditing PMO methodologies. Barbara is an international speaker, and author of *Managing Business Analysis: A Framework for Sustainable Projects and Corporate Strategy Success*.⁴ Her articles have been published in *Strategize Magazine*.

Darren Radford is President and CEO Aspire, Ltd., a management-consulting firm in Vancouver, Canada. He holds an LL.B (Hons) Law Degree, a Master of Science and a Master of Business Administration from Henley Management College, Oxford, UK. He also holds PMP, PRINCE2 and DSDM-Agile credentials. He has worked for the BC Provincial Health Services Authority, Boeing, Boeing Canada-AeroInfo, Vancity, and the Wideman Education Foundation (WEF). His specialties are Business Strategy; Adaptive Capacity Development; Business Transformation; Portfolio Management; Program Management, and Governance.

Book Structure

The content of this book is set out in four sections covering twelve chapters and one Appendix as follows:

Preface

SECTION 1: Discovery, scope and defining business solutions

1. Identifying Scope and Solutions: Are we doing the Right Things?
2. Evolution of Scope on a Project
3. Stakeholder Engagement and Involvement
4. Implications of Business Architecture

SECTION 2: Mid-flight change control

5. Requirements Development Life Cycle
6. Governance

SECTION 3: Applying project and Architecture methodologies

7. Implications of Agile on scope
8. Waterfall
9. Enterprise architecture

SECTION 4: Implementation and beyond

10. Roll-out: Marketing and socializing the solution
11. Handing over to operations (BAU)
12. Decommissioning and sun-setting

Appendix A: Sample document templates

For the most part, the book is well written with a clear and convincing style, but with occasional bursts of unnecessarily long sentences and long paragraphs. The book is well illustrated with bullet lists, diagrams, and short case studies interspersed in the text to emphasize the surrounding message. Each chapter is supported by a list of references. The book has a total of 260 pages including Appendix A, which provides some eighteen templates and layouts. The book does not have a Glossary of Terms.

What we liked

Chapter 1 starts out by taking aim at the distinctions between portfolio, program, and project management. The authors suggest that while these terms are common in today's lexicon, "a clear, concise, and commonly accepted understanding of these concepts does not exist".⁵ They suggest that the distinctions between them are blurred at best, partly because these concepts are broad and complex,

especially at a time when solutions are desired quickly and simply.

The authors observe that in particular it is not easy to find a shared understanding of "what" program management is and, more critically, "how" to do it. They suggest that there are three main definitions:

1. Simply a large project [overseeing a collection of sub elements]
2. A group of interrelated projects [which amounts to more or less the same thing]
3. A composite of identifying and selecting major change initiatives, and seeing them realized.

Assuming the last definitions, then portfolio management is a matter of doing the **right things**, while the project context is a question of doing **things right**. Therefore, focusing on Program Management is the way to bridge between corporate strategy and project execution. That's all well and good, but that means a significant impact on the tools and techniques of each domain. This is illustrated by a Table comparing the different foci between Project, Program and Portfolio for such tools and techniques as Context, Scope, Change, Planning, and so on.⁶

However, this structure enables a series of initiatives with a broader life span, than is normally attributed to the management of a single project. For example:⁷

Value Management

1. Strategic Objectives
2. Expected Benefits
3. Expected Outcomes

Project Management

1. Proposed Actions
2. Proposed Deliverables
3. Delivered outputs

Operational Improvement

1. Enhanced Capabilities
2. Realized Outcomes
3. Realized Benefits

As an aside, what can we call this logical assembly of activities? The term "Project Management" is being used more and more to cover the whole domain of portfolio management to project management, notwithstanding that its "official" definition still refers to a single project. In any case, we suggest, as the authors advocate, the list shown above is more than (just) project management because it includes "Value Management" at the front end and "Operational Improvement" at the back end, neither of which are within the purview of the typical project manager.⁸ In short, this broader life span represents a much more complete picture.

Incidentally, we really like the idea of the underpinning of a program by a **program "Decision Case"**, just as projects should be underpinned by a project "**Business Case**".⁹ At the project level, the authors also emphasize the importance of a communication plan that necessarily starts out with a project vision because "it is the one guiding statement that brings people on board and allows them to maintain a consistent focus to their activities."¹⁰

So, back to the issue of "scope" and scope changes. Within the context just described, the authors observe:

"Scope is the high-level set of characteristics that defines the targeted solution. The target, however, can change as the understanding of the problem or strategy (or even

alternative solutions) are analyzed by the various stakeholders."¹¹

"In the past, nearly every change to scope was viewed as 'scope creep'. That is not the case. Scope creep occurs when the requirements, design, or development dictates or implements a feature that does not meet the objectives or the needs of the solution being produced. If, however, scope is changed as a result of the requirements, design, or development processes in order to meet the objectives and business needs, it is a valid evolution or fluctuation in scope."¹²

Later the authors state that:¹³

"The need to change from the original scope should not be seen as a negative, but actually a necessary, positive, and enabling reality."

In traditional project management terms, this is all part of the Concept and Feasibility phases of the project life span, so it is not surprising that the so-called "scope" is highly volatile. It is after the project has been formalized, i.e., a "contract" has been established with schedule and cost obligations, that changes to scope involving corresponding changes to time and cost commitments are both disruptive and costly. This is when such changes are likely to be labeled as scope creep, and if not scope creep, then certainly as "Clarifications".

Chapter 3, Stakeholder Engagement, tackles the difficult area of the "I'll tell you when I see it" brigade. Such groups are unavoidable because they simply do not have the background and experience to visualize the proposed product in the abstract. Moreover, they frequently do not like to admit this shortcoming. Interestingly, this discussion leads to a description of several different Types of Participation that a manager should be aware of in dealing with personality conflicts in the team. These types include The Non-Participant, The Heckler, and The Hijacker that are familiar to most meeting facilitators.¹⁴

Downside

We do have a few "nitpicks", probably matters of opinion depending on the reader's preconceived notions. The first is that we just hate long sentences and here is a prime example, one of several. In discussing Program Management as "a key driver to maturing business capability and growing sustainable value"¹⁵ the authors observe:¹⁶

"In addition to the classic business capabilities defined in the value chain (sales, operations, etc.) a modern, dynamic, and fast-paced environment requires that a core competence of any organization going forward must be the ability to identify, react, and adapt to change (in technology, attitudes, trends, and so on) to ensure continued relevance and competitive viability."

If you can get your mind around this 56 word marketing hype sentence, you are doing well.

We take issue with the authors' suggestion that one of the conditions that traditional leadership strives to stamp out is "Failure, and acceptance that some failure (albeit, not catastrophic) is a part of the journey and should be embraced."¹⁷ This is far too sweeping. Well-run companies allow new employees to hold progressive responsibilities that provide them the opportunity to learn from such challenges first hand. The authors further suggest that: "the concept of 'ready, fire, aim' is more conducive to many modern situations".¹⁸ That may be more prevalent today, but is still an abdication of good management.

In chapter 3, Stakeholder engagement and involvement, the authors describe and emphasize the

importance of having a communications policy and plan — a position with which we entirely agree. However, they go on to observe that: "Once the communication plan has been established, it is critical that it is shared among the team and the business, *and enforced*."¹⁹ With this we also agree, but given the disparate nature of the collection of stakeholders on most projects, who does the "enforcing"?

In setting expectations, under Expectation Management,²⁰ there are a couple of scenarios²¹ that we have experienced that the authors might have mentioned. The first is the case where employees refuse to cooperate simply because they are highly disgruntled with some other action by the organization which has no connections to the project whatsoever. They use the project simply to make their presence felt. The second case is where management has issued an over arching vision statement that "By delivering the same message consistently, the project team demonstrate cohesiveness and buy-in to the solution."²² Unfortunately, many employees neither understand the vision statement, nor see the need for it. Thus, far from demonstrating cohesiveness, the repetition of the vision statement becomes no more than "lip service".

But here's the big one. In section 4, the first chapter, Chapter 10, the authors discuss Roll-out: i.e., Marketing and socializing the solution. Here they observe: "Make no mistake. Change Management is one part of the trifecta required for a successful project execution and delivery."²³ The "trifecta" that they are talking about is shown in Figure 1.²⁴

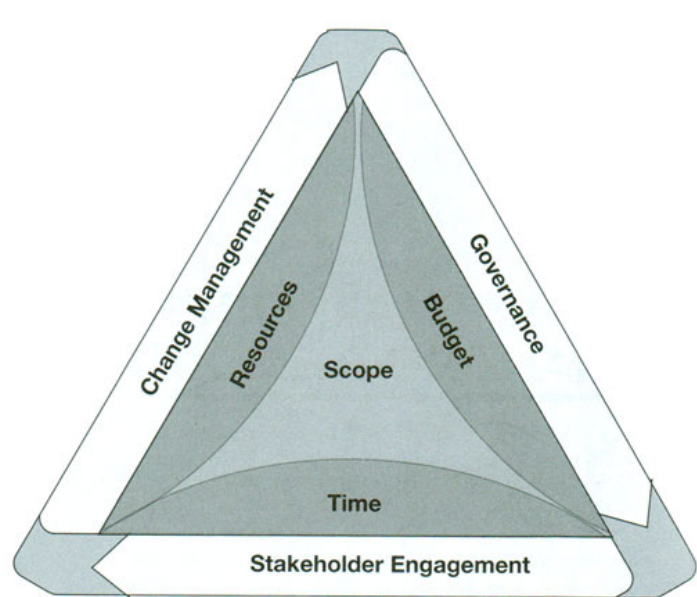


Figure 1: Trifecta of project execution and delivery related to triple constraints

We are not sure that "trifecta" is the correct label. "Triad" might be a better descriptor. But the big issue is that, although still commonly used even by those who should know better, the triple constraint is an obsolete construct. The primary variables encountered in any project are "Scope and Quality (grade)" of the product on the one hand, giving rise to the "schedule and cost" incurred by the project on the other.

For a comprehensive explanation and illustration see:

http://www.maxwideman.com/pm_101/in_general.htm#myproject.

Summary

Of course, the title of the book "Going Beyond The Waterfall" should be warning enough that the authors are intent on extolling the merits of the "Agile" approach to managing projects. However, chapters 7 & 8 in Section 3 of the book make a valiant attempt to compare the respective merits of the Agile versus Waterfall approach to the design of the project's life span. Both chapters set out respectively: What is Agile or Waterfall; Misconceptions about each; Impacts on Scope; Impacts on Requirements; Managing Scope Change; and relative Risks of each.²⁵

This comparison works well, though we still felt some bias in the text favoring Agile. Nevertheless, the authors' final position is to opt for a Hybrid model that takes the best of both worlds applied according to the phase of the overall initiative from Strategy to Realization, or from Analysis to Deployment. This approach is shown graphically in Figure 2.²⁶ As an aside, note that the very straight arrow across the bottom is labeled as a "cycle progression"!

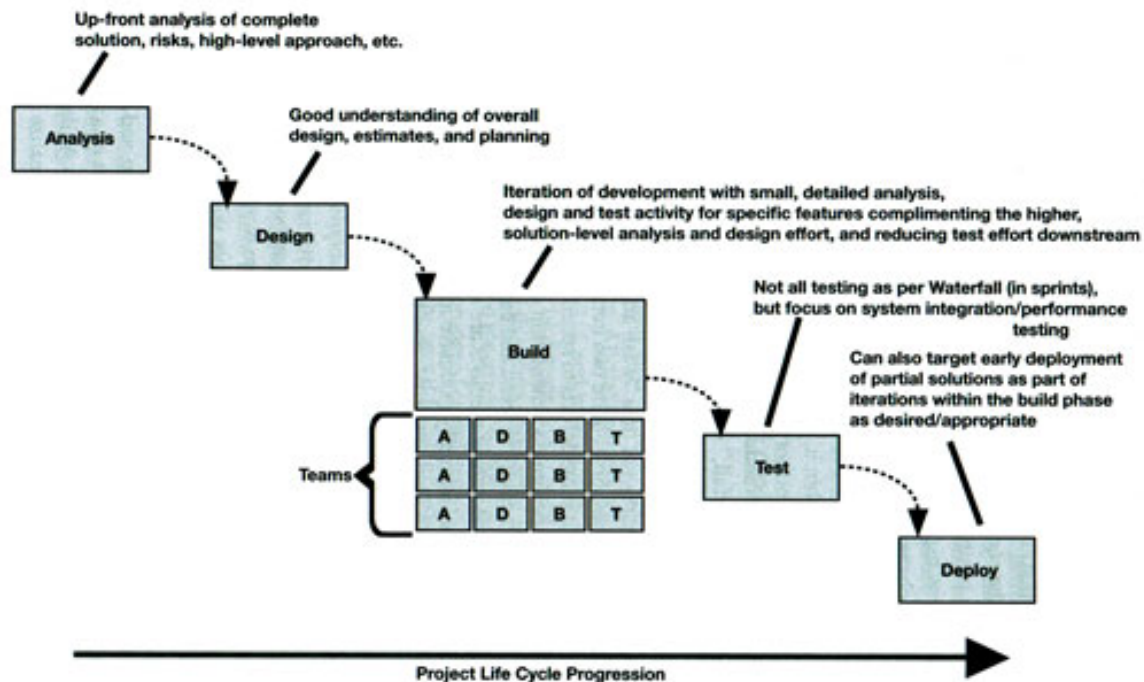


Figure 2: Water-Scrum-Fall blended life [span] model

In our view, the authors provide very sound and realistic advice for the types of projects envisaged, not necessarily only IT projects. For readers in senior positions, the book provides a good read and actionable advice and templates for advancing the cause of the enterprise at its upper levels. After all, as the authors observe, "The next decade of digital business will see continued pressure for organizations to react quickly to changing conditions in the economy, market, and competition."²⁷ The assumption is that this book provides some answers.

Postscript

As always we submit our draft reviews for author's comment before publishing. Here is what Barbara Davis had to say:²⁸

"We were not trying to suggest that all failure is great. Rather, the whole purpose of the book was about accepting that some degree of failure may be an outcome and that scope is fluid, not rigid, because it must adapt when failure does occur.

In addition, we were not actually advocating Agile over any other methodology. We both firmly believe that Agile, as is RUP or Waterfall, is one of several tools or approaches that one can leverage in the execution of the project. Which tool or approach is wholly dependent upon the type, size, circumstances of the project and the tolerance of the company. We simply wanted to provide context for them so that people can make an educated and informed decision about which to use instead of defaulting to only one.

Barbara"

That, I think, is fair comment.

R. Max Wideman
Fellow, PMI

¹ Davis, Barbara, & Darren Radford, *Going Beyond The Waterfall* J. Ross Publishing, 2014, pp xii-xiii

² Ibid, p xi

³ Ibid, p xv

⁴ Davis, Barbara, *Managing Business Analysis*, J. Ross Publishing, 2013

⁵ *Going Beyond The Waterfall*, p4

⁶ Ibid, Table 1.1 Differences between project, program and portfolio management on p6

⁷ Ibid, Figure 1.1, p7

⁸ Please Email Max at maxw@maxwideman.com with your suggestions. How about "Strategic Realization Management" (SRM)?

⁹ Ibid, *The Decision Case*, p12

¹⁰ Ibid, p54

¹¹ Ibid, p35.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, p116

¹⁴ Ibid, pp 64-66

¹⁵ Ibid, p8

¹⁶ Ibid. Other examples can be found on p 29 and 33.

¹⁷ Ibid, p11

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, p47

²⁰ Ibid, p57

²¹ Ibid, with disastrous consequences we might add

²² Ibid, p60

²³ Ibid, p183

²⁴ Ibid, p184

²⁵ Ibid, pp 27-160

²⁶ Ibid, p158

²⁷ Ibid, p176

²⁸ By Email, 10/4/2015